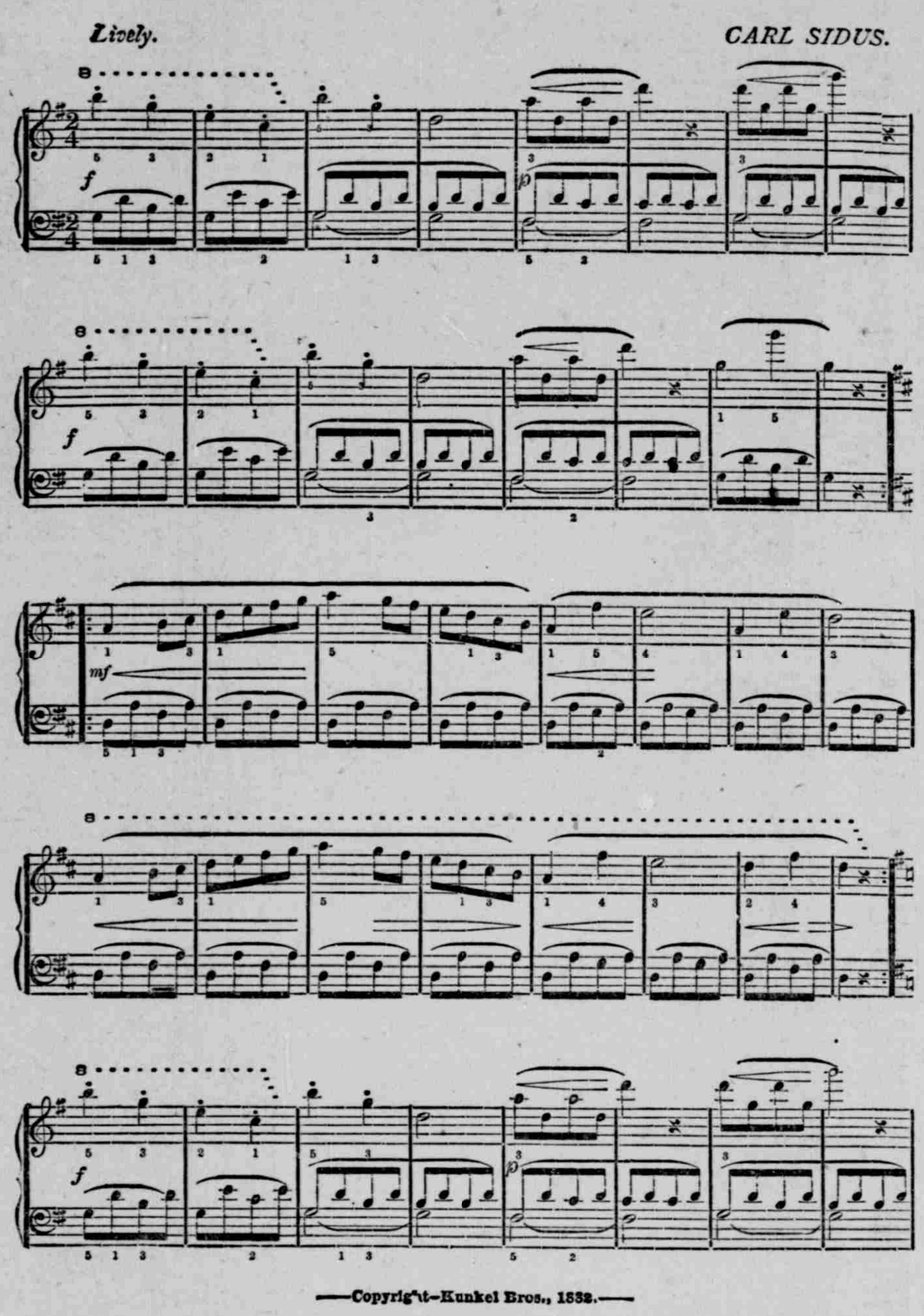
MERRY SLEIGH BELLS.

RONDO.

Lively. *CARL SIDUS.*



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JIM.

BY MARION MANVILLE.

It was a bleak, blustering, early morning in November. The winds were busy with the fallen leaves, gamboling among them like a lot of frolicsome puppies, worrying something because they were cutting their teeth, rather than intent to do mischief.

"I saw a sky full of moons last night—in my dreams," said Rolly to his mother, as he drew on his mittens before the kitchen fire and gave himself a preparatory toast before going out for the city. "What's it a sign of?"

"A sign you're late and better hurry," said Mrs. Klinks.

"O mother! how practical you are. But that's as good a sign as any; here goes, good-bye," and Rolly set the excitable candle to flickering and sputtering at the whiff of frosty air which rushed in as he went out.

The neighbors all called Rolly odd, and some even said he was a "little queer." Certainly he was a quaint, genial fellow, full of pleasantry and good humor, and with a certain stock of imagination which cropped out now and then in dreams and what not, appearing droll enough in a man who was only a small farmer thirty-five years old and unmarried. He had been formally christened Roland, but had always been called by the baby diminutive, which did not trouble him in the least.

Rolly was a poet. One of the speechless sort—its a pity we don't have more of them—whose soul was full of beauty, whose eye always caught and appreciated every one of nature's varying moods. He was a poet who lacked expression; an artist who could not transfer to canvas; a philanthropist who had only his good heart and strong hand to assist the world with; a preacher whose sermons never materialized and took the form of speech.

As he toppled out of the house—Rolly always had the appearance of toppling, being possessed of a very large head, a very small body and a pair of very long legs, which always seemed to have a tendency to throw off the trunk—and toppled into his little produce wagon, he appeared to be about as whimsical and good-natured a body as one ever beheld. Nor was this impression made any the less strong when he turned and shouted back, with his full-lunged hearty voice:

"They were all new moons, mother!"

Mrs. Klinks threw out the dishwater emphatically, and shook her head after the rattling wagon, half in perplexity and half in disgusted amusement.

"A sky full of new moons! Now that boy'll be thinkin' 'bout them new moons all day, an' like as not somebody'll over-reach him. Be just like him," continued she, a little mixed in her metaphor, "be just like him! I orter went too. But I can't be in two places 't th' same time!" and Mrs. Klinks heaved a despairing sigh.

Mrs. Klinks, in common with many another mother, cherished the delusion that her offspring had not yet grown up. He was always—and always would be—"that boy" to her. How many a child would be endowed with perennial youth if time only reckoned years as a mother does.

Rolly rattled along at a round pace, the ponies making a merry rustling among the dead leaves. It was not yet break of day, and promised nothing in the way of a glorious sunrise or bright hours to follow.

Ten miles to Kansas City and ten miles back. Rag seemed to understand the gravity of the situation; but Tag, being a frisky and self-opinioned pony, made occasional futile attempts at excursions into the fields, and twinkling his small heels in disgust at their failure. This same small span of ponies had been purchased by Rolly at an auction, greatly to his mother's dismay. Her ejaculation upon seeing them had christened as comical a span as ever frisked through life.

"Wall! if you ain't got rag-tag and bob-tail at last!"

And Rolly, serene soul, had roared out a cheerful appreciation of the joke, and called them from that time forth Rag and Tag.

"Curious 'bout that dream," mused Rolly to himself. "Makes me think of the time I dreamed the cornstalks was giving a crop of stars. My! But that was a purty sight. Seems's if I could almos' see it now. Such a shinin' through th' leaves, an' such cobs as them was! An' when I stripped th' husks off an' found a bunch of stars every time—my, O my!"

"My, O my!" stood Rolly in stead of stronger expletives. This expression was varied occasionally to "My stars," and together the two demonstrated surprise, grief, amazement, joy—and all sorts of emotions a mild and gentle man could experience.

The ponies' little feet beat a gentle rattat upon the hard ground, and day was beginning to break as they rattled over a stony and uneven road, and a long ridge over the Caw river, into that part of Kansas City which lies in the State of Kansas, for this young and active metropolis lies, curiously enough, upon the line which divides Missouri and and Kansas. The greater part, spread over its many hills, is in Missouri; but not a little, including factories and wholesale houses, is in Kansas.

Passing along a street through which a railroad ran, Tag made some very emphatic objections to an ash barrel which lay overturned in the gutter. The pony was so obstinate in his impressions of that innocent looking barrel, that Rolly, after his usual mildly reproving and wondering "Now Tag," was constrained to look at it himself.

"Jimminy! ain't it cold, though." And then in growing distrust of Rolly's prolonged stare, he muttered resentfully, "Say, mister, wot yer givin' us, blinkin' yer peepers at a feller that way?"

Rolly recovered sufficiently at the sound of his voice, to ask how he came in that barrel.

"O my eye! he wants ter kno' how I com' in ther. O I was inwited in ther by the Pres'dent, I was."

The impudence of this and the manner in which it was said, would have ruffled a man less mild than Rolly. In him it only aroused a feeling of pity.

"Poor little chap! ye didn't sleep there last night!"

The gray day was just creeping over the city, and Rolly discovered, grayer than the day itself, and creeping as slowly out of the barrel as day was over the hills and houses, a ragged mite of a boy, who laborously got himself into a half-erect posture and shook himself as a dog does coming out of water, thereby diffusing a cloud of fine dust and ashes into the air, and eliciting a snort of astonishment and disapproval from the alert Tag.

"My stars!" exclaimed Rolly, utterly aghast at this spectacle. It required a minute or two for him to recover sufficiently to frame a question. The boy, with the composure of the gamin', was the first to recover himself.

Rolly hoped in his heart the boy would deny this, but that irrepressible youth, with an air of jocular levity, took a rag out of some one of the tatters in his coat, and with an imitation as correct as it was grotesque, whisked it over his one old shoe, through whose gaping holes the small toes were visible, after the manner of a dude dusting off his boots, and replied:

"I guv a bankeret ther las' night. I did. Th' Gov'ner of Mishoory an' his pals didn't but jes went afore yer kum."

The incredible bravado and swagger with which this was said were appalling. Rolly scratched his head in consternation and could only resort to his useful, "My, O my!" Seeing he had made an evident impression the boy continued, leering up at Rolly like a small monkey:

"I kum up from Newerleens ter meet th' Pres'dent of the U. S. by special inwite, I did. He couldn't cornduck this exposish 'ithout I kum. Sez I, 'Grover,' sez I, 'if 'twasn't bein' it's you I couldn't never think er leavin' my biznis to home, 'cich is pressin',' sez I. 'But I'll kum,' sez I——"

The boy was interrupted here by a cough which racked his small frame and left him too nearly breathless to resume.

"Where are your folks?" asked Rolly.

"Ain't got none," was the reply in a hoarse but sulky tone.

"Are they dead?"

"Hain't never had none."

"My, O my!" ejaculated Rolly. "Poor little rat! who takes care of you?"

"Nobody."

"What's yer name?"

"Jim."

"D'ye live here?"

"Naw. Didn't I tole yer? I'm a stow."

"A what?"

"A stow. I stowed it from New York ter S' Awgussten, an' from S' Awgussten ter Mobile, an' from Mobile ter New Erleens. An' I stowed it up ther Mississip' ter S' Loois, an' I stowed it from S' Loois ter this ere place. O, I'm fly on the stow, I am."

The sly, elfish, old look upon this weazened little face made the chills run up Rolly's comfortable spine; but his great heart warmed to the shivering little waif.

"S'pose ye hop up on ther load with me, an' we'll go ter market."

It was the boy's turn to look astonished. There was a shade less aggressiveness in his tones as he asked half-wistfully, half-defiantly:

"Wot yer givin' us?"

"An' we'll git some hot coffee an' a lunch of some sort."

The boy's mouth watered, but he hesitated. "Yer won't guv a feller up ter th' cops will yer?"

"No," said Rolly, not knowing who the "cops" were, but determined to befriend this small atom in human form.

The boy gave himself another shake, which set afloat another cloud of ashes, which settled down around the ponies' heads. Tag shook his small head very decidedly and gave a protesting sneeze, but all to no avail. The boy is taken up and Rolly dusts him off as well as he can with his big, broad hand, and wraps the comfortable old buffalo robe about his shivering knees. The robe is about as shaggy and about as warm as the ponies themselves, but Rolly supplements it with a heavy bag from the load, which has been used to cover up some baskets of apples and persimmons. The childs teeth were chattering with the cold.

"Have an apple?" asks Rolly, hospitably, reaching over and selecting one of the largest and sweetest.

"Yerbetyerlife," responded this singular specimen of the genus homo. He falls too ravenously, and gulps down the apple about as a starving dog would gulp down a choice steak. Rolly watches the spasmodic contraction of his lean and skinny little throat in a quandary whether it is better to allow him to choke himself to death and enjoy it, or oblige him to eat slower and be miserable, but decides to let him take his chances as usual.

The cold apple does not warm the child's shivering frame much, but it gives him some little cheer. After it is eaten he says in a conversational way:

"I cribbed a apple off 'n a apple-stand yesterday. That's all I had ter eat."

Rolly can't believe this.

"Al ye had t' eat yesterday?"

"Yep, wishermaycroak if 't wa'nt."

Rolly's sympathy and astonishment is too profound to find relief even in his "stars," so he hurries up the ponies and relapses into silence.

How he got through with his trades he could not have told you, he was in such a pre-occupied condition. He fed the boy first of all, who, having gorged himself like an anaconda, became stupid and fell asleep, anaconda fashion. Rolly covered him up carefully, and, having sold his produce, started for home with his new charge profoundly sleeping.

Poor Jim! Any ash cat in the whole great city last night was better off than you, for the Lord provides a winter coat for them if no more. Unfed, unhoused, unwarmed; filth, vermin and poverty your only privileges; your soul as benighted as any heathen who bows before an idol; repulsive and unresponsive to every finer element in nature, what is there, Jim, to warrant your having been born, or to justify your having lived?

There is more excuse for the heathen, and he is in every way a more attractive picture to look upon. He is further off—which is a good thing; he worships something—which is better than nothing; he arouses much sympathy—which you, with your impudence and depravity, find it hard to do; and his vices are vices of heathenism, while yours, oh unlovely Jim, yours are essentially vices of civilization.

If Jim could worship anything it would be a good square meal, or a fire, to thaw the freezing marrow in his bones. But as worship may be considered a quality of soul apart from hunger or freezing, it is doubtful if Jim can be said to have the elements of worship in his soul, even in the germ.

As Rolly neared home the irregularity of his proceeding became more and more apparent. He says "Now Tag" as mildly as ever, when occasion requires, which it does less frequently than in the morning, for Tag is in a subdued and hungry mood, and concentrates his energies for the most part toward getting to his stable with expedition. But Rolly says, "My stars," and "If this don't beat the new moons all to pieces," and "My, O my," frequently, each time after looking back upon the sleeping boy, and all in all is in quite a fog of expression for him.

That this same small boy is used to being knocked about is apparent even in his slumbers, for the back-breaking jolts of the empty produce wagon disturb him not in the least. They may now and then lift him from his bed of bags and blankets and return him again far from gently. He is used to hard knocks and sleeps on. He sleeps just as quietly while Rolly puts up the team, but with the instinct of the hunted he awakes at the touch of the human hand and sits up. Evidently he recalls all previous experiences clearly, for while half asleep, and before his stiff lids are opened, he says in his sulky, defiant tone:

"I hain't took nothin'—wot yer givin' us?"

Rolly lifts him down gently and says in an equally gentle voice:

"Here we air at home, Jimmie. We'll go in an' hav' supper."

He adapts himself clumsily to the short, slouching steps of the boy and opens the door quietly.

"Mother, this is Jim. I found him in the city; he hain't got nary father, ner mother, ner home, and nobody ter look arter him, so I fetched him 'long of me."

Mrs. Klinks is speechless. A more unprepossessing, uninviting, unattractive boy could not have been picked up in the whole wide world. As Jim stands and looks at her, his small face full of a shrewd and knowing appreciation of the way matters stand, the boy looks positively impish. He is not pretty, he is not clean—as eye and nostril can both testify—but he is sharp, with the sharpness of wickedness and experience with the worst side of human nature, so low that it is beyond the brute.

"Rolly Klinks!" Beyond that Rolly's mother is unable to go, but the expression of the face and voice convey worlds of meaning.

Jim, with his hands in his ragged pockets looks leisurely about and surveys the cosy farm room with an air of disinterested interest.

"Purty fly in yere, haint yer, missis? Comfertbler, an' smells better'n th' las' place I puts up at."

Rolly rubs his head in amazement, and signifies his astonishment at the effrontery of this small boy by his mild "My stars!"

Mrs. Klinks abhors dirt. Uncleanliness in her abomination.

"Rolly, take thet ther boy in ter th' woodshed an' wash him th' first six miles."

"That ther boy" has the same affection for soap and water that the Old Boy is said to have for holy water, so this process if fraught with many discouragements.

"Say, mister, I dassent git my skin wet, it'd floor me shore pop. Wy, I promised my mother on 'er death-bed I wouldn't never wash me, an' I haint, by hooky. Say, wot yer givin' us!" etc., etc.

At one time Jim waxed pugilistic in his objections, but after some mild persuasion from Rolly submitted to be thoroughly scrubbed and actually allowed himself to come under Rolly's unskilled but effective shears as the crowning insult of all. During this operation the variety and fluency of Jim's profane repertory provokes even the mild Rolly into a reprimand. Jim comes forth a victim, clean but miserable, savory but unhappy. He brightened a little at supper, and fell to with such an appetite that he speedily ate himself to sleep again.

"Rolly Klinks!" Mrs. Klinks never called her son by his full name except upon those rare occasions when she was a little "riled," as she put it. "Rolly Klinks, what be ye a goin ter do with thet their awful boy?"

And Rolly, good Rolly, in this wise:

"Well, ye see, mother, it needs a smart, spry boy ter pick apples, an' persimmons, an' pawpaws—"

"Persimmons an' fiddlesticks! Ye know them fruits was all picked weeks ago."

"But they'll grow agin, mother, an' by next year Jimmie'll be jes right ter pick 'em, an' save me a heap of work."

An angry sniff from Mrs. Klinks.

"An' he can help you, mother, doin' chores when I'm away, an' be mighty handy."

Mrs. Klinks too disgusted to reply.

"Mother?"

No answer.

Then Rolly, as mildly and sweetly as ever:

"Mother, I've read a sight about foreign missions, an' I've done my share as I could with small means to help an' encourage 'em an' other church work thet others was doin'. But here is a heathen, mother." Rolly arose and pointed with unconscious impressiveness at the sleeping boy; "here is a heathen, mother, more in th' dark an' more in need o' salvation an' redemption than any thet the Lord lets live in their appointed places in foreign lands. My duty is plain to me, mother. Thet boy has a soul, an' some day th' Lord will demand thet soul of him, an' He may ask me, 'Where is thy brother?'"

The rude, but honest, eloquence of this touched Mrs. Klinks. She hesitated a minute. More practical than Rolly she appreciated the goodness of his act, but dreaded its consequences. At last she said in a somewhat milder tone:

"Yer a good boy, Rolly, but ye ain't more'n half baked."

And Rolly, feeling he had carried the day, laughed his full-lunged laugh and toppled out to do chores.

Jim was not ornamental, and he could not be said to be useful. His appreciation of the animal comforts surrounding him was keen. He basked before the fire as a cat would. But this appreciation did not extend beyond the knowledge and acceptance of merely creature comforts. The spirit which prompted them was beyond his conception. His conviction of religion and the Bible seemed mainly a hazy idea that the former meant big churches and "style," and that all "cuss-words" originated in the latter. Their perversion from original uses did not concern him in the least. He was an embryo socialist. Thieving was second nature to him, and no amount of eloquence could persuade him it was wrong.

"Wy! lookahere, boss. Me'n' a pal haint got nothin'. Some ole duffer he's got th' chips. We cracks his crib some dark night, an' gits away with th' swag. Then we lives in clover till we gits blowed. O my eye! Ain't it a rum go, though? Well, I should mutter to murmer."

"But that's stealin' an' the Bible says we mus'n't."

To which replies the irreverent Jim: "Git out! We haint got nothin', and he's got too much! We splits th' dif."

Jim's appreciation of the sinfulness of lies was equally dense and preverted. To him a lie was a piece of commendable and praiseworthy business strategy. His scorn of commonplace truth-tellers was lofty and intense. Upon being told the old and familiar "hatchet story," as an illustration of the rewards of truthfulness, his remark was:

"Want he a softy, though! He orter of sez, sezhe, 'No, gov'ner, I didn't done it; wishermaycroak if I did; but I seen th' chap as did done it a-hoofin' it threw th' orchard jes afore yer come up, gov'ner, hopeterdie if I didn't. He was a redheaded feller with an ax,' sezhe. I tel yer, boss, Gawge didn't know nothin' what fun was unless he seen old man Wash a-leggin' it threw th' orchid an' shinnin' it over thet ther rail fence arter th' red-headed feller with th' ax. Wouldn't it a ben a circus to seen Gawge say 'git ther, ole man, tra la.' O, I guess not." And Jim laughed immoderately at his version—or perversion, rather,—of our national tradition concerning the cherry tree.

"Gawge was a tenderfoot, an' them fellers ain't no good on earth, I tell yer."

A week of slow, unprogressive, unsatisfying time went by. No one was happy. Rolly's cheerfulness was abating. Mrs. Klinks was resignedly miserable, and Jim, having been "filled up" as he expressed it, plainly longed for the vicissitudes and variations of city life. The ash-cat homesick for its alley.

Rolly, had to go to town again with a load of potatoes, and consented to take Jim along with him. So Rag and Tag were again brought into requisition, Tag with his unconquerable aversion to Jim cropping out in small starts and snorts and jumps, as a wise pony who would say:

"I have no confidence in him. I saw him pop out of an ash-barrel."

Rolly said to his mother as they started, with a subdued attempt at cheerfulness:

"I dreamed of putting new cheeses into an ash-barrel. What's that a sign of, mother?"

But Mrs. Klinks, ignoring the sign, replied with grim humor:

"Ye do things 'bout as sensible when ye sleep as ye do when ye're awake."

The ten miles again. Rag busy and attending strictly to business and Tag objecting to every familiar stump and land-mark with shies and snorts and flirting defiance with his small heels, as a pony would say to himself and the stumps:

"I know you, of course. But I like to make my master think I don't, and I like to let you and my master both know I don't care a kick for any of you—poor two-legged thing, or no-legged at all, which is worse yet!"

Jim beguiled the tedium of the ride by adding to his large stock of improbable tales several new and original ones, remarkable for their audacity, if nothing more. Rolly had about given up in despair. It was like trying to stop a leak in a dike with straws, to check Jim's fondness for lies, pure and simple. Thrust a handful of straw-truths into one leak and the flood would burst out in another place with increased vigor. It was terrible.

Passing the depot as they entered the city, Jim looked wistfully at the throng gathered to meet coming friends or speed the parting or go upon journeys themselves.

"Purty fly fer a feller ter skip out an' not be a stow. Wished I could go 'long with ther swells."

This comforted Rolly somewhat, for it was the nearest approach to aspiration he had detected in Jim.

Going up the long hill Jim made a pretext of seeing better in the back of the wagon. Rolly drove along for a few minutes without looking around. When he did there was no Jim sitting upon the end of the little produce wagon, but running back down the crowded road, darting in and out among the wheels and horses' feet like a cat, was the small figure—deserting his best friend. He looked around frequently and apprehensively at Rolly, and in so doing failed to see what Rolly saw, what he stood up in the produce wagon and shouted to warn him from, what other men in other wagons shouted excitedly at him:

"Look out for the cable!"

Jim thought they were apprehending him, that they were crying, perhaps, "Stop, thief!" "Catch that boy!" and in his turnings and twistings to evade imagined pursuers he found the cleared road of the up track, failed to know why it was clear, ran upon it, looking back, failed to hear the alarm gong, or to catch its meaning if he did its sound, and forgot his small life in a great crash which heralded oblivion.

Poor little Jim! Uncared for, untaught, unloved and unlovable. Nothing noble in him, nothing heroic in his death, nothing to be praised in his life. A little "home heathen," too near to be romantic, too dirty to be near, and too ignorant to be saved.

Among his dreams Rolly is troubled by the questions:

"How are they to be reached? What method can we use? What language can we speak to ears which hear but understand not, or understand but comprehend not? Would there have been hope for him here? Is there hope for him hereafter?"

Who knows?

Flossie's Politeness.

Harpers' Bazar.

"And how is your little brother George, Flossie?"

"He's dead, thank you."

The Secret of It.

Nebraska State Journal.

The tall sycamore of the Wabash is throwing mud at Gen. Harrison. Voorhees has quite a reputation for disliking loyal men.

CHASED BY A THUNDERBOLT.

An Occasion When Engineer Byers Made Good Time with His Locomotive.

Omaha Herald.

"What was the fastest time you ever made?" asked the talker of Johnnie Byers, one of the best-known engineers in the Western country.

"Well," he returned, "I reckon a run of forty miles I made on the North Platte end of the division was the slickest. You see, I was sent out from Omaha with a light engine to pull in a special director's car from North Platte, and when I got within about fifty miles of the latter station I was given an order to run regardless of everything—other trains were side-tracked for me.

"I hadn't left the station more'n five minutes before a heavy thunder-storm came up—they do it awful quick out there—and me and my fireman enjoyed the finest display of fireworks you ever see.

"All of a sudden Tom yells to me:

"'Holy Moses! The lightning's struck the track! Pull out, Johnny, or we're done for!'

"I looked back, and sure enough there came a streak of lightning along the right rail, headed for us. It was a kinder whitish-blue sort of a thing, and was humping along like it had a time order.

"I knew that if it struck the machine we was all gone to the sweet hereafter, and I pulled her wide open.

"Well, the old machine seemed to know something was up, and she gave a jump like a scared antelope and off ahead of that lightning streak. At first the streak seemed to be gaining on us, but after the engine got good and started, my, you ought to see the distance play out between us, but the lightning didn't seem to be discouraged. It just spit on its hands and clawed along after us like a promissory note after an insolvent debtor.

"Well, I seen something must be done, but couldn't make out how to do it. It was plain that if this thing kept up much longer the water and coal would give out, not to speak of red-hot journals. I says to Tom:

"'Heave away, now, with the coal and we'll fool him,' and, although he'd been heaving away since the start of the race, that seemed to help, for I could see the lightning was lagging. Then I turned the machine over to him and crawled back on the tank. I had an idea. There was a siding a few miles ahead, and if we could make it—well, you'll see. There was a broken draw-bar on the tank, and when I reckoned we'd got about the right distance I dropped it. I could see it rolling along for quite a distance, then I got back to the engine and slackened up.

"All of a sudden I heard the most outlandish racket you ever heard of behind us. Then the air was full of splinters, and when I rolled back, sure enough the draw-bar had fallen in the switch I'd calculated on hitting, and had made such a connection with the main track that the lightning had been switched off and had run down on the siding and into two cars of powder standing there. I'm sorry I can't give you the exact time of that run, but, under the circumstances, you couldn't expect a man to hold a watch, now could you?"

The Origin of "Mr. Meeson's Will."

J. L. A. M. in London Globe.

It has been stated that the main idea of this book was "conveyed" from a previous work by Aubert. This may or may not be so, but at all events I am in a position to suggest a far more likely source for this curious piece of fiction. Mr. Rider Haggard and myself happened to be called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn on the same night some few years ago. After the ceremony the newly-made advocates took wine together under the supervision of the benchers, according to ancient custom. Naturally enough, a number of legal anecdotes, new and old, were trotted out, and among them one telling how an eminent chancery lawyer was hoaxed by some of his pupils. These ribald young men concocted an imaginary case in which counsel was invited to say whether or not a will tattooed on a person's back could be admitted to probate. If I recollect right the learned gentleman wrote an elaborate opinion deciding the question in the affirmative. Now it is more than probable that this story came to the ears of Mr. Rider Haggard either on this or some other occasion, for he moved in legal circles for some little time and practiced in the probate and divorce courts. At any rate, since the appearance of "Mr. Meeson's Will" I have always assumed that the author had done what he had a perfect right to do—that is, constructed his story upon the bare idea of this anecdote, which was common property.

Married a Year.

Time.

She—Who's is oo?

He—Oor's.

She—For ever, and ever, and ever!

He—Es, I is.

She—Has oo dot $5 for oor baby, dear!

He—Thunder! no, Melinda. Think I'm made of money, don't you?